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Official Records

Disarmament Commission

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New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views (continued)

Mr. Ahmed (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation is pleased to see Mr. Zarif chairing the proceedings of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We would ask him to accept our heartiest felicitations and assurances of our fullest cooperation as he steers the work of this important Commission. We are confident that, under his able and skilful leadership, our deliberations will be fruitful. We would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation covering major issues before this substantive session.

The Disarmament Commission is the specialized deliberative body of the United Nations entrusted with the task of in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. We strongly support the work of this multilateral machinery and believe that, in this forum, there is scope for harmonious and effective work. The result of such work can definitely have a positive impact on the disarmament scenario of the world.

Bangladesh considers disarmament to be a vitally important instrument for achieving international security. We favour general and complete disarmament. Our commitment to this goal is unequivocal and flows from our constitutional obligation. Our adherence to

major disarmament treaties also stems from that. As an active member of the Conference on Disarmament, Bangladesh remains committed to contributing to discussions, deliberations and substantive negotiations on the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization, has observed that, during the past year, existing disarmament agreements were threatened by a number of developments, which are likely not only to undermine global security, but also to cause an increase in global military expenditures. The disarmament machinery in the United Nations was not fully utilized and no consensus was reached on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which could set universal goals for the immediate future. The cap on nuclear proliferation remains unshielded and there are suggestions that the number of threshold States may potentially be on the rise. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by subcritical tests.

However bleak the situation may be, there is a perceptible and indeed expanding international consensus that favours the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The unequivocal declaration by the five nuclear Powers at the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that they will eliminate nuclear weapons is indeed heartening. This, if adhered to in letter and spirit is a significant step towards a world free of nuclear danger. The call made by The Hague

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Appeal for Peace for the delegitimization of war reflects the conscience of humankind. The agreement finally reached on the starting of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty is also a step forward, as is the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on Landmines. It is now of utmost importance that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), together with its agreed objectives, become universally accepted.

Since its adoption, efforts to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty continue. It is crucial that the three nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified the Treaty, as well as those States whose ratification is required for its entry into force, deposit their instruments promptly. I am pleased to inform the Commission that Bangladesh, which signed the CTBT on 24 October 1996, also ratified it earlier this year. However, Bangladesh's major concern has been and continues to be the heavy financial obligations that would devolve on it and other least developed countries on account of the implementation of the CTBT, comprising the expenses of its Preparatory Commission, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the verification regime, including the International Monitoring System of the CTBT and the Technical Secretariat. As the Coordinator of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has already voiced its concern on the matter since the first meeting of the CTBT Preparatory Commission in New York. We also did so at the recent Vienna meeting. We need to find a mechanism which would relieve the least developed countries of this heavy burden without jeopardizing the Treaty implementation.

In the field of conventional arms, attention has remained focused on transparency in armaments. We commend the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts in this field. Here, I would like to inform the Commission that Bangladesh has already provided the necessary information for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and will continue to do so in future.

It is undeniable that, in the present-day world, the open sale and easy availability of small arms have become a matter of serious concern. It is the abundant and ready supply of easy-to-use tools of conflict, weapons of death and disability, that is responsible for the estimated 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries, of which, shockingly, 80 per cent are

those of women and children. Illicit international trafficking, the transfer of small arms and their accumulation in many countries constitute a serious threat to their populations and to national and regional security. The problem has been exacerbated by the absence of global norms or standards for the reduction of such accumulation, transfer and trafficking. The holding of an international conference on all aspects of illicit arms next year would be an important step towards the long-felt need to build up a global consensus on the issue as a matter of utmost importance and urgency.

As a party to the Biological Weapons Convention, Bangladesh is fully aware of its responsibilities and takes its obligations seriously. By not having evolved, acquired or stockpiled biological weapons, Bangladesh is in full accord with the provisions of the Convention. Full adherence to the Convention by all States would be a guarantee of the effective elimination of biological weapons. There is therefore a clear need for charting a credible compliance regime. In this context, Bangladesh welcomes the ongoing work of the ad hoc group entrusted to negotiate a protocol to strengthen the Convention by developing a verification and compliance mechanism.

As for the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it and, having no chemical weapons programmes or facilities, we ratified the Convention in April 1997. But our ratification of the Convention will have little meaning unless the major chemical-weapon countries join it. We underscore the necessity of universal adherence to the Convention and call upon all States that have not done so to become States parties to the Convention without delay. We also underline the importance of the early initiation of activities under all relevant provisions of the Convention by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

In today's world, regional disarmament presents newer challenges. In this context, we attach considerable importance to the activities of the United Nations Regional Centres for peace and development. My delegation has always urged that these Centres be given sufficient support and resources so that they can be more active in promoting dialogue on disarmament issues in the regional and subregional contexts. As regards the Centre in Asia and the Pacific, Bangladesh continues to remain disappointed to see that, despite our repeated requests, both in the Disarmament

Commission and in the Committee on Disarmament of the General Assembly, the Centre has not been moved to its location in Kathmandu and is being run from here in New York. There is no reason for the Centre to be run from New York when it was established under a General Assembly resolution to be based in Kathmandu, in the same way that the two other Regional Centres in Africa and Latin America are based in their respective regions and the concerned Directors are also stationed there.

Therefore, the present anomalous practice of running the Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific from New York, rather than from the host country, does not stand to reason. We once again urge the Department for Disarmament Affairs to look into the matter with greater urgency.

We believe and support the concept that reallocation of resources from armaments to development is essential. Savings from a small cut in armament expenditures can contribute substantially to financing for development. This is particularly true in the case of the major Powers, whose small cut in military expenditures and their reallocation to development in the developing world would make a significant difference.

In closing, may I say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation of disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war and destruction — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the abyss of poverty and underdevelopment. The savings from even a small cut in military expenditures by major Powers can contribute substantially to the development efforts of the developing countries. Such voluntary cuts in expenditure on arms can raise the dividends for investing in the improvement of the quality of life of the people.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We, too, are delighted to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting and we wish you and all the members of the Bureau productive work.

Russia assigns a key role in multilateral disarmament to the United Nations. We believe that the importance of the Organization as a disarmament centre will continue to grow in the twenty-first century.

Russia views the full elimination of nuclear weapons as the ultimate goal of its foreign policy on

disarmament issues. We strongly favour phased and comprehensive progress on the part of all five nuclear Powers in nuclear disarmament, without artificial delays or unnecessary haste, in the context of maintaining strategic stability. It is important that our efforts in nuclear disarmament fall organically within the construction of a fair, democratic world order based on mutual trust and the equal security of all States. It is precisely in the context of such system that we can effectively implement the goals and potential of establishing a nuclear-free world.

As the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, emphasized in his statement at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):

"Russia is firm in its nuclear disarmament commitments and intends in the future to pursue them in the context of maintaining strategic stability and the system of disarmament treaties established in the past decade as a basis for further reductions and limitations in strategic offensive weapons."

We highly appreciate the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, held in New York. We are convinced that its results will have a positive impact on the dynamics of the disarmament and non-proliferation processes. The more we are able to strengthen the Treaty, the stronger will the basis be for deepening and enhancing the nuclear disarmament process as a whole. The dependencies here are directly proportionate.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, much has been done in recent years. The practical steps taken to reduce strategic offensive weapons were an important vector of efforts in this area. I would recall that, in April this year, Russia ratified an important set of nuclear disarmament agreements: the Start II Treaty and the 1997 package of agreements on anti-ballistic missiles (ABM), as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Thanks to these major practical steps of ours, the way has been opened to begin negotiations on Start III, which should lead to further radical reduction in nuclear arsenals. We expect that our American partners will also play their part in implementing the necessary formalities for ratifying Start II, the 1997 package of ABM agreements and the CTBT.

The implementation of bilateral Russian-American START agreements, in the context of

preserving the ABM Treaty, as well as the future negotiations of the five and the implementation of the five-sided agreements on the further reduction of nuclear weapons are the items on the nuclear disarmament agenda for the near future. We do not consider it timely or useful, therefore, to begin negotiations on the nuclear disarmament programme within a concrete time-frame.

One extremely urgent issue is the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. The Russian side is ready for substantive and specific negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials at the Conference on Disarmament. The development of weapon-grade uranium in Russia ended several years ago. A programme to close production facilities for weapon-grade plutonium is being developed.

At the same time, it should be clear to all that the process of nuclear reduction is possible only in the context of preserving and complying with the 1972 ABM Treaty, which prohibits the development of ABM systems on the territory of any country. The viability of the ABM Treaty will also determine the extension of the arms race into outer space. Its regime will prevent the emergence of an entire category of outer space weapons, particularly missile defence systems. The importance of the Treaty transcends the context of relations between the two super-Powers and has key significance for international security. This is attested to by the outcome of the negotiations on relevant resolutions of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, which confirm the need to maintain and strengthen the ABM Treaty regime.

The development of national ABM systems and the collapse of the Treaty would have a very destructive impact on stability throughout the world and lead to a weakening of the entire complex of disarmament agreements established over almost half a century.

As an alternative to the collapse of the ABM, the Russian side has proposed a number of well-known initiatives on the issue of the missile threat and missile proliferation. Among these is our proposal to create a global monitoring system for the non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies and to promote international cooperation on non-strategic missile defence systems. Both these proposals are major elements of Russian thought on international

interaction on anti-missile systems that would not prejudice the ABM Treaty. We are convinced that their practical implementation would represent a step in the right direction.

I should like to recall that, at the Russian-American summit in June this year, an agreement was reached to establish a joint Russian-American missile watch centre that could eventually assume a multilateral character.

Russia continues consistently to implement unilateral initiatives in the sphere of tactical nuclear weapons. Among other things, such weapons have been entirely removed from surface ships and the general-purpose submarine forces of land-based naval aviation. One third of nuclear warheads have been eliminated from naval aviation and sea-based fleets.

An important role in narrowing the geographic scope of nuclear weapons is being played through the establishment of various nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. We wholeheartedly welcome and encourage this process, which will ultimately help us approach the goal of a nuclear-free world. Russia is a party to most protocols of treaties establishing such zones. We consider it appropriate to recall the Russian proposal that nuclear weapons be concentrated within the confines of the territories of the nuclear States.

We feel that the United Nations should be one of the leading centres for addressing the issues of conventional disarmament. We support, *inter alia*, the convening in 2001 of a United Nations conference devoted to the problems of illicit arms trafficking in all its aspects. In our view, however, it is currently premature to develop any radical international measures to reduce or regulate the legal trade, production, transfer or stockpiling of such weapons. The delivery of weapons to meet the legitimate defensive needs of States corresponds to the meaning of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which enshrines the right of States to individual and collective self-defence.

We view the successful adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) to be a contribution to strengthening European security. It is paramount to implement in practice the results of this adaptation. We believe that the European experience with the Treaty could be taken into account in the elaboration of confidence-building measures in other regions of the world.

Russia favours the development of widespread international cooperation to prevent the illicit traffic in conventional weapons, particularly small and light arms, including through interaction between law enforcement, customs and state licensing authorities.

The solution of the overall problem of the illegal proliferation of conventional weapons cannot be considered separately from the need to develop and adopt practical measures to prevent and regulate armed conflicts. In this connection, we feel it essential that general approaches be developed to ensure timely responses to crises, the prevention of conflicts and the provision of assistance to States confronting the problems of illicit arms trafficking.

We consider it appropriate to raise the issue of the need to harmonize and update national legislation and regulations on arms-export controls and to develop appropriate further measures in the sphere of existing monitoring mechanisms, among which are the Vienna agreements, the outcome of corresponding work done by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Groups of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and on Small Arms.

Russia is firmly convinced that the Disarmament Commission is an important international forum in the sphere of disarmament. I hope that the consideration of issues on the Commission's agenda will be successful and productive.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. Zarif, on his assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its current session. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. The Chinese delegation will cooperate fully with the Bureau and other delegations.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman of the last session, Mr. Abdelaziz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, for his contribution to the work of that session.

This is the first session of the Disarmament Commission convened in the new century and the new millennium. At this juncture, people are still concerned about the global security environment. The world is far from tranquil. The old security concepts and the cold-

war mentality based on military alliance and the build-up of armaments linger on, posing a serious threat to international peace and stability. Hegemonism and power politics are still hampering the establishment of a just and rational new international political and economic order.

Against this backdrop, international arms control and disarmament efforts have suffered some serious setbacks. A certain country, although very strongly encouraged at the negotiation and conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), refused to ratify it, casting doubt over the Treaty's prospects for entering into force. The very same country, in disregard of strong international opposition, is intensifying its efforts to develop national and theatre missile defence systems, to the detriment of global strategic equilibrium and regional stability. That country has even threatened to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that underpins international arms-control efforts. The strong momentum emerging in the field of international disarmament after the end of the cold war has been severely weakened. People are worried about the future course of disarmament efforts.

The Chinese delegation maintains that cooperation on an equal footing is essential for progress in international disarmament efforts. This has been true in the past and will remain so in the future. This is also an important part of the new security concept advocated by China, which is based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. All countries, big or small, rich or poor, strong or weak, should have an equal right to security. Disarmament is not intended to enhance the security of an individual country or a group of countries. Disarmament should not become a tool for stronger nations to control weaker ones, still less an instrument for a handful of countries to optimize their weaponry in order to seek unilateral security advantage.

The Chinese delegation has always attached importance to the Disarmament Commission and has participated in its every session in a constructive manner. The Chinese delegation believes that the Commission plays an irreplaceable role in formulating guidelines for international arms control and disarmament. In current circumstances, as international disarmament efforts have come to a crossroads, we need the Disarmament Commission even more to explore principles and ways to advance the disarmament process.

As agreed upon by all delegations, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" is one of the two substantive agenda items of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. Since last session, there have been some new developments in the field of nuclear disarmament. The Chinese delegation welcomes the ratification of the START II Treaty and the CTBT by the Russian Federation. Such moves give a new impetus to the nuclear disarmament process. We expect START II to be implemented and START III negotiations initiated as soon as possible.

Irreversibility is a basic guiding principle for nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament should be a comprehensive and irreversible process, rather than an opportunity for major nuclear Powers to optimize and upgrade their nuclear arsenals. The nuclear warheads deactivated in accordance with disarmament agreements should be destroyed immediately and not retained for future redeployment. Putting deactivated nuclear warheads in so-called "inactive reserve" under constant maintenance cannot be regarded as nuclear disarmament in any real sense.

The prevention of nuclear-weapon proliferation is a necessary step towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), convened not long ago, demonstrated once again the common will of the international community against nuclear proliferation. The outcome of that Conference will help to enhance the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon countries concerned to sign the CTBT and to accede to the NPT as soon as possible. The Chinese Government has already submitted the CTBT to the National People's Congress for approval and hopes that the review and approval process will be speedy.

China has consistently advocated the comprehensive prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. The Chinese delegation is of the view that the most rational and feasible confidence-building measure in current circumstances is for nuclear-weapon States to undertake unconditionally and in legal form not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. The prohibition of the first use of nuclear weapons will increase mutual trust among nuclear-weapon States and between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. This will reduce the risk of nuclear war

and create the necessary conditions for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

China supports the negotiation and conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Meanwhile, we hold that, when a country pursues the development of a missile defence system with outer space as its main base, the prevention of an arms race in outer space is more urgent than negotiations on a cut-off treaty. Therefore, the three major disarmament issues — nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material cut-off treaty — should be dealt with in a balanced manner at the Conference on Disarmament.

China supports practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The Chinese delegation maintains that confidence-building measures with respect to conventional arms should not compromise the security of countries concerned. We should explore principles and ways to guarantee the security of countries concerned so as to create a favourable atmosphere for establishing global confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

The Chinese delegation is also of the view that confidence-building measures should not be discussed in abstract terms. Instead, we should explore concrete measures in the light of specific conditions and timing and seek common ground while putting aside differences. The Chinese delegation welcomes the measures taken by some countries in Europe, America and Africa in recent years. We think that these measures are conducive to the maintenance of regional peace and stability and may facilitate the exploration of global confidence-building measures on conventional arms.

However, I should like to point out that, given varying regional conditions, the experience and practice of one region may offer some reference, but cannot be rigidly copied by, still less imposed on other regions. The Chinese delegation holds that confidence-building measures should be established in a phased approach, starting with the easy ones. As initial steps, we might explore some principles, such as pursuing a national defence policy that is defensive in nature, keeping armaments at a reasonable level without jeopardizing the security and stability of other countries, and refraining from targeting a third country in bilateral security cooperation.

China pursues a good-neighbourly policy and attaches importance to the establishment of practical confidence-building measures with its neighbours. In recent years, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed the Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field along the Border Areas and the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas. A regular summit meeting has been institutionalized among the five countries. China and India signed the Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas and the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity Along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out that China is firmly opposed to the attempts of certain countries to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries by means of arms sales. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. This has been recognized by the international community. However, certain countries, in disregard of this fact, have been selling large amounts of advanced weapons to Taiwan. This action violates the principle of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It not only jeopardizes China's sovereignty and security, but also poses a threat to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. This goes against the spirit of confidence-building measures. We demand that countries concerned stop this misguided practice as soon as possible.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): First of all, let me extend to Mr. Zarif our congratulations on his assumption of his duties as Chairman of this august body. I am confident that, under his able and wise leadership and with the active participation of all delegations, the Commission's work will yield effective and fruitful results.

Ukraine is encouraged by and positively evaluates the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. A common understanding on the nuclear disarmament agenda was reached at the Conference for the first time in 15 years. We believe that the results of the Conference are very important for the work of this session of the Disarmament Commission, specifically in the field of nuclear disarmament. My delegation would like to

underline the fact that, for the first time, all nuclear States declared a unilateral commitment to eliminating gradually their nuclear arsenals. We are of the opinion that those States should play the leading role in the process of nuclear disarmament and take practical steps towards that goal.

In this context, Ukraine welcomes the ratification of the START II treaty and the package of New York agreements to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty by the Russian parliament. We believe that this could give an additional impetus to the global process of nuclear disarmament and to the negotiations between the United States and Russia on this issue in particular. We hope that the United States will follow the Russian Federation by ratifying START II and the package as soon as possible. Now it is imperative to ensure the implementation of START II and to resume talks on START III.

Ukraine is concerned about the present situation regarding the ABM Treaty. We clearly understand that a process of further strategic offensive arms limitation and maintaining strategic stability in the world depends today largely on preserving the ABM Treaty. As a party to the Treaty, Ukraine notes the important role played by two leading nuclear Powers — the United States and the Russian Federation. We fully realize that the fate of the Treaty depends primarily on the position of those States on the issue of its possible adaptation to new realities.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform Member States about the preparations in Ukraine for the ratification of the memorandum of understanding relating to the ABM Treaty, signed on 26 September 1997 in New York. This document legally codifies the succession under the ABM Treaty, and its entry into force will have a positive effect on the Treaty's viability in new geopolitical circumstances.

The necessity for improving and strengthening the existing international nuclear non-proliferation regime remains one of the most burning issues of today. We are convinced that the best way to achieve this is to enhance the efficiency of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to make it universal. This was unequivocally demonstrated in the course of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We continue to call upon all those States that are not yet parties to the NPT to sign the Treaty.

My delegation is convinced that enlargement of the "nuclear club" is absolutely unacceptable.

Let me stress that the Government of Ukraine pays particular attention to the issue of implementation of a full moratorium on nuclear tests. Ukraine welcomes the earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We consider the CTBT a significant part of the international legal basis for promoting the process of real nuclear disarmament, and we call upon all States — first of all, nuclear ones, whose ratification of the Treaty is indispensable for its entry into force — to complete the ratification procedures.

Ukraine believes that security assurances play a significant role in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is our belief that one effective means of providing such assurances is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Ukraine is a consistent supporter of the establishment of such zones.

Ukraine attaches considerable importance to confidence-building measures in the sphere of conventional weapons. One of the main problems in this field is the illegal trade in and spread of small arms and light weapons, which is the focus of attention of various international organizations, Governments and non-governmental institutions, since these weapons appear to be the primary cause of numerous casualties. Ukraine fully realizes the importance of this topic. We understand that it demands coordinated and concerted efforts on the multilateral level and requires a thorough study of the political, military and economic aspects, in particular States' legitimate defence and security needs.

We support the basic measures developed by the European Union, focused on efficient export and import licensing for small arms and light weapons, and for combating illicit trafficking in these weapons. My delegation also supports the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Forum for Security Cooperation aimed at the prevention of the proliferation of destabilizing small arms and light weapons. For its part, Ukraine is pursuing a responsible policy regarding the supply of military goods to the international market. The efficient national export-control system provides for licensing the export and import of weapons, including small arms and light weapons. In our country the internal control of small

arms and light weapons is regulated by legislative acts and normative documents.

I also remind the Commission about the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Tarasyuk, at the ad hoc meeting of the Security Council last September on holding a conference of major producers and suppliers, with the purpose of studying concrete measures for preventing illegal international weapons transfers. We believe such steps will facilitate confidence-building in the sphere of conventional arms.

Finally, let me express the hope that this session will give further impetus to the ongoing international efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and assist effective combating of the uncontrolled proliferation and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I congratulate Mr. Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on his election as Chairman for this year's substantive session. We also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau who have been elected for this session, and thank the former Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt for his very successful leadership of the last session.

The adoption — at last, this morning — of the agenda for the present session has once again demonstrated the ability of member States to cooperate fully when faced with a choice between seeing a negotiating process fail and compromising on key points in a way acceptable to all. Despite the alarming evidence that a spirit of confrontation was triumphing over widely accepted human values and interests, in the end this tradition of compromise was once again confirmed.

Last year the Disarmament Commission adopted two consensus instruments which showed the significant contribution States are making to the development of a disarmament and international security instrument and mechanisms. This work once again demonstrated the importance of our forum and how essential it is, if steady progress is to be made in promoting international peace and security.

Despite the fact that this year the Disarmament Commission is beginning its consideration of two new items — nuclear disarmament and conventional arms — we are not beginning our work from scratch. A

significant basis for our work can be found in the compromises achieved on nuclear disarmament at the year 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The programme agreed and adopted by all the Governments and set out in the Final Document of the Conference gives the international community a clear picture of the steps that will have to be taken in the near future.

The first is to have the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) enter into force as soon as possible. I would like particularly to note that on 25 April the CTBT was ratified by both houses of the Belarus Parliament, which reconfirms the steadfast and consistent commitment of the Government of Belarus to its responsibilities to ensure nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament so as to promote international peace and security.

Our delegation attaches great importance to the universality of this Treaty which, in the assessment of an absolute majority of States, is the most optimal compromise on this issue at this stage and which enjoys the support of the five nuclear Powers. Despite the fact that the United States Congress has refused to ratify the Treaty, which is essential for the entire nuclear disarmament process, we express the hope that the present and future United States Administrations will consistently comply with the Treaty's provisions.

Secondly, Belarus, as is well known, was the first nuclear-weapon State to voluntarily relinquish the nuclear option. Therefore, we are convinced of the need for legally binding guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States. Belarus supports efforts to develop a uniform approach to the need to draw up a legally binding international convention on such guarantees. At the same time, we welcome the nuclear Powers' unilateral declaration of their policy not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Belarus is convinced of the need, at this stage of nuclear disarmament, to establish a combination of multilateral and bilateral guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Thirdly, to support the strategic stability that undeniably affects every aspect of the international disarmament process, it is important that Russia ratify START II and also that the United States and Russia reach agreement regarding the framework for START III. In this context, I would like to take this opportunity

to express our delegation's great concern over the plan to deploy national anti-missile defence systems, in violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We have no doubt that this would undermine the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime and have a most negative impact on the system of strategic stability that has developed over decades.

Fourthly, there is an incontrovertible and universally recognized need to begin as soon as possible in the Conference on Disarmament negotiations to prohibit the production of fissile materials for use in weapons. The creation of a subsidiary organ of the Conference on Disarmament in the very near future will allow a focused approach to this issue in all its aspects.

Fifthly, Belarus considers that under present conditions nuclear disarmament must be supplemented by steps to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including measures to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones. We welcome the signature and implementation of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok, as well as progress in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Central Asia and in giving Mongolia a nuclear-weapon-free status. We also support the efforts of all the countries in the Middle East to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone there.

Reflecting on its contributions to and responsibility in the area of nuclear disarmament, Belarus continues to believe in the important and fruitful initiative to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe. We are convinced that the time will come when political considerations of the moment, which are impeding the strengthening of a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe, will be eliminated and this idea will become a reality. It would not impinge on the interests of any State in the region; on the contrary, it would strengthen security and stability in the European region, and thus foster global security and stability. Belarus is open to cooperating on this issue with countries of Eastern Europe and with any other countries.

The Government of Belarus believes that such principles of nuclear disarmament as transparency with respect to nuclear weapons, the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament measures and of measures to control nuclear weapons, the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons and the accelerated destruction of

nuclear weapons, with an unequivocal commitment to the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals, should be the thrust of the international community's concerted nuclear disarmament efforts. We are committed to reducing the nuclear threat and danger through consistent and phased disarmament, including through the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime — with the ultimate objective, of course, of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Given the increased number of regional and local conflicts, approaches to strengthening cooperation and measures to build confidence among States, military-political alliances and combinations are more urgently needed than ever before. In this situation, the European-wide cooperation on confidence-building and security measures that has been organized in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provides a very effective model for cooperation among countries. These were the precise objectives of the treaty to reduce conventional weapons in Europe.

The Republic of Belarus takes very seriously its obligations under international treaties and already has experience in the destruction of conventional weapons in accordance with the treaty. Despite the Republic's significant financial burdens, our country has fulfilled its commitment, which accounted for approximately 10 per cent of all reductions of heavy technology under the treaty. We hope that this contribution by our country has made possible the consolidation of these positive results in the area of conventional weapons reduction and in strengthening confidence and cooperation among European countries — efforts that now count among the achievements in the field of global security.

We also believe that further steps in the area of confidence-building among States, particularly given the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through the admission of new members, should be carried out in accordance with the interests of all countries in the region. Any attempts to establish security at the expense of other States unacceptable. In this connection, our delegation will actively participate in the consideration of the question of practical measures to strengthen and build confidence in the sphere of conventional weapons.

Belarus participated with other countries in the Commission's previous session on the development of a working document on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. This session was preceded by a number of international meetings and consultations in this area. Our position is that a voluntary approach in this area is essential, as is an agreement among States on the guiding principles. There is also a need for an integrated approach to activities to develop practical measures for disarmament in post-conflict situations, confidence-building, rendering financial and technical assistance, carrying out other measures with respect to the control of conventional weapons, including their reduction and disarmament. All these issues must be viewed in relation to one another, particularly together with other regional and subregional initiatives, which promote confidence and peace among countries.

In conclusion, I would like to express our conviction that at this session the Disarmament Commission will be able to strike a proper balance between national interests and the future security of the international community as a whole.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.